A Twenty Page Paper. . .Really?

Writing has always come easy to me. In school I always enjoyed writing short stories for my friends and even writing notes behind my teacher’s backs. I have grown up some since then and have moved on to facebook comments and texting. I have never had problems with writing assignments in school. I always was able to pick a topic and run with it dishing out pages upon pages of information, until last year. My freshman year of college I took W132. We wrote a twenty page paper about Native Americans. This was the worst experience I have ever had with writing, but I learned more about the writing process then I ever thought I could.

Going into W132 I was a freshman and I had just turned 18 years old. I was extremely nervous because it was my first English class my first semester and IUPUI. I walk into to class and I quickly realize that I am by far the youngest person in my entire class. Let’s just say under the circumstances I was more focused on how uncomfortable I was in that class then writing anything. On the first day we were informed that we would be writing one paper the whole semester which I was really excited about, naively thinking I would not have a heavy work load for that class. Also on the first day we were told that the topic we would be writing about was Native Americans, another reason I thought this would be a simple assignment because my mom reads a lot about Native Americans and grew up around several of them so I knew I could count on her to help me with any missing information. The most depressing piece of information I learned that day was the paper should be around twenty pages which made me nervous because up until that point the longest paper I had even written was almost five full pages.

As we got started with all the research I realized my previous assumptions were horribly wrong. I had no idea what I was doing except for the fact that I picked the widest topic possible being “Native Americans and Religion” Drowning in loads of information I thought about dropping class doubting myself and my writing skills. Each class we would focus on a certain part of the part. For example one day we worked on just the introduction and our thesis statement. Another day we went to the library and learn how to find helpful books in every section of the library which was good for me the freshman who had only been in the library during orientation. One day in class it hit me I was not writing on gigantic paper, was writing several small papers to create the end product. It was all about the process how to write a good paper and after I understood that I was less stressed and more confident in my work.

Instead of writing just about one side or one point of view I found three sides to write about which was something new to me. I always thought with papers they were always one-sided and I always tried to write on the fence because I greatly dislike conflict. In this paper I was able to research every side every opinion and use them all to form my own opinion. This writing experience forced me to put my own biases aside and focus on the facts. I was taught how to be open minded and respect everything I read. This was difficult for me at first but it is an important task any writer should learn when producing a research paper.

I learned the entire writing process during this experience and I continuously use a lot of the things I learned in the classes I am taking this year. I liked how we took a different approach to writing then I had been exposed to in high school. I was not forced to write an outline before I truly knew what exactly I wanted to do with the paper. I did not have to have all my sources before I started writing I got to add on to them depending on what information I needed. Another important thing we did was we wrote the introduction and the conclusion last, which in high school I never realized that is what I was supposed to do. The hardest thing I had to do was the work cited page but I learned a lot and got very good at it since I had eighteen sources at the end. When I teach high school I really hope to help my students these things so they do not have to be overwhelmed when they go to college like I was. The first day of W132 I was a nervous uncomfortable freshman but by the end I grew into a technically skilled and confident writer.